


The recent murderous attack on a policeman by a man armed with a revolver has again fixed the attention of the Sols. on the question of the sufficiency of the means of protection at present afforded to the Police, and on the expediency of arming them with revolvers or some other more efficient weapon than they at present possess.

The matter is one of great gravity and one which demands a thorough investigation and an immediate decision.

Its importance is shown by the facts stated in Mr. Vincent's mem. of Sep. 6. 183 where it appears that in the last five years there have been ten cases of Policemen being shot at by armed burglars. In two of these cases the Constables were killed, in six they were wounded but in only three out of the

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the ten cases were the Criminals brought to justice - a very serious and disheartening feature in this class of crime.

When this question has been previously raised by the S. of S. he has been assured by the Commissioners that there was no discontent on the part of the force with the present armament or any desire for farther protection.

This impression seems to have been derived from the reports of the Superintendents though the S. of S. was always inclined to doubt whether this view really represented the feeling of the Constables.

In consequence of the recent attack on a Constable by a man armed with a revolver the S. of S. has called for fuller reports which embrace the opinion of the Inspectors who are more likely to be acquainted

acquainted with the real sentiments of the men -

A summary of their reports has been furnished to the S.G.S. and has convinced him that the view previously reported to him by the Commissioners was erroneous and that there is a wide spread and general dissatisfaction in the Police with the present means furnished them for self defence. This feeling appears to the S.G.S. to be perfectly natural and entirely well founded.

Though a majority of the Superintendents are adverse to the use of revolvers by the Police it is remarkable that on this subject the opinion of the Inspectors is as nearly as possible equally divided. This reveals a state of feeling in the force entirely different from that which has been
formerly

formerly reported to the Soff. He is quite convinced that the Police as a body are not satisfied that their protection should be left on its present footing.

There are differences of opinion as to the proper remedy to be adopted but all are of the same mind that the truncheon and the rattle as at present employed are not adequate to their safety.

Mr Vincent has informed the Soff. that he is surprised at the amount of discontent in the force on this subject and that he was before unaware of the extent to which it existed.

It is impossible that this condition of things and this state of sentiment in the Police force should ~~be~~ be allowed to continue for a moment longer than is necessary in order properly to consider
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and deal with a matter which if allowed to remain as it is may demoralise the whole spirit & courage of the Police -

The Soff. with these reports before him disclosing a most serious danger in the Police finds himself unfortunately without the means of personally consulting the Chief Commissioner or Col. Pearson. It is impossible of course that the Soff. can come to so grave a decision affecting the force as that of arming the Police without the advantage of their counsel. The Soff. cannot at all accept the suggestions of Col. Labalmondiere in his letter of Sep. 6. as affording in any respect an adequate solution of the matter -

Adverting to this part of the subject the Soff. feels called upon to express his

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opinion that having regard to the present magnitude of the Metropolitan Police Force the vast population of London & the constant dangers to which it is exposed (which the Soff. has particular reason for knowing were never greater than at this present time) there ought never to be less than two of the Commissioners (i.e. the Chief Commissioner and one Assistant Commissioner or two Assistant Commissioners) in charge at the same time of the Metropolis. There can be no difficulty in making the arrangements with respect ^{to} turns of leave such as to secure this end, which the Soff. feels to be necessary & which he is confident therefore will be hereafter observed -

The present difficulty is one of urgent importance upon which the Soff. desires to have

have the immediate advice of all the Commissioners in consultation with one another. Upon a full consideration of their reports it may probably be advisable as is suggested in some of the memos submitted to the Sps. that a small committee of the Police should be at once appointed — thoroughly to investigate the subject and to take evidence as to the opinion of the men and as to the practice in other places and to report the conclusions of such a Committee to the Sps.

As the days are already beginning to shorten this is a matter which admits of no delay — and unwilling as the Sps. is to trench upon the much needed holidays of the Commissioners he feels that in a matter so vital to the interests of the Police they

They will at once take this matter in hand and examine into it on the spot so as to place the S.F.S. in a position within a week or two to take the necessary action upon it. If however the Commissioners are of opinion that the matter can be dealt with in any other way better than by such a Committee the S.F.S. will leave to the Commissioners to adopt such method at their discretion -

(Dd) H. V. H.

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